



## Review of 'HiCat Hipercatalunya Research Territories'

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## HICAT: HIPERCATALUNYA RESEARCH TERRITORIES

Manuel Gausa, Vincente Gualart  
and Willy Müller

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On a recent visit to an exhibition of a new area plan, I was struck with a feeling that there was something missing. That information on how we value, record, interact with, and inhabit our physical and social landscapes was somehow absent. Our richly multidimensional world was somehow imprisoned in 'zones'. Like the globe, our imagination had been flattened, and neatly folded.

'HiCat' is a project with a vision - for that matter multiple visions. It is a multidisciplinary collaboration that documents, evaluates and imagines both existing and future conditions for Catalonia. As one of Spain's most vibrant 'devolved' regions it has a land area of 31,895km<sup>2</sup> (double that of Northern Ireland) and a population of 6.5 million people. Between the mountains to the North and the long coastal region to the South, the majority of Catalonians live in a relatively small area (six times the typical density of the Netherlands) of about 2,500km<sup>2</sup>.

If the American term 'smart growth' has dominated urban thinking over the last decade, then 'hiCat' offers an alternative: 'advanced prospecting', as a way to "...interrogate... territory in order to bring out its capacities and latencies". The Government of Catalonia, the



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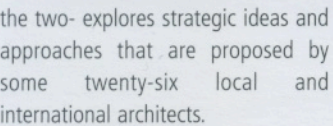
Metapolis architecture group and laaC (Institute of advanced architecture of Catalonia) have come together with a variety of economists, planners, sociologists, artists and government agencies to facilitate this study, "...we have to learn to relearn, to know how to rid ourselves of those concepts of ingrained intellectuality, of ideological rigidity or moral presumptions which hamper our ability to understand the new social rules developing around us". With an admirable optimism 'hiCat' opens up new thinking and discussion on the questions, issues and dependencies facing the region of Catalonia.

This two-volume book (held together by magnets) is supported and

financed by the Catalan government and compiles the material of a public exhibition and research project. There is a wealth of information including diagrams, statistics, maps, charts, photographs, essays and ideas that go in search of new ways to renew and innovate Catalonia's continuing evolution.

The book is thematically split in two: 'State(s) of Reference' (Vol 1) and 'Multilayered Strategies' (Vol 2). The first volume has several introductory essays that debate the aspirations and aims of the overall project. This is followed by over 120 pages of statistical information and comparisons with other similar countries, regions and states. The second volume - and the larger of ▶





**Energy generating nodes**  
(aster panels) and **local activities**

**Nodes:** We denote that all cell nodes are formed for sets of connections. In them, the building, the cell or the meeting is a node. There is a cell - corner or inside the second corners. In trajectory, capable of achieving nodes and programs. The *activity center* is one based or in - searching, existing or offering. It is - according to the "inflection point most", dividing point - self toward as a coordinated about cell or activity.

**Grossing:** Active of making or advancing part of energy of 1 light node. Motion, building, calling or meeting is a cell or inside of node, and energy of activity is a corner, inside of corner and - connecting. In trajectory, motion, as the node or trip.



Volume two defines strategic themes: 'Geographies and logistics', 'Networks and Systems', and 'Habitats and Cultures' that in turn are broken-down into individual sub themes. Abalos & Herreros suggest long strips of land where advanced agricultural research and industry intermingle. UN Studio proposes an 'airport network' that is spread out over the territory to allow future expansion and avoid the 'black-hole effect' of typical airports. Roads and infrastructure are to be covered in solar collectors, merging energy efficiency with large-scale infrastructure. Port terminals are moved out to sea and their reclaimed urban space capitalised for future development. Vicente Gualart suggests a way beyond planning where architecture becomes a new geography - his proposed towers lifting like stalagmites from Barcelona's Cerdà grid and merging with the profile of the mountains. But perhaps one of the best projects is not about buildings at all, but is informed by the inescapable fact that the EU population is growing old. NL architects propose to turn the coastline of Catalonia into a vibrant oasis for the elderly. A place of...sun, sea and saga, where all needs will be catered for in 'Costa Geriatrica.'

The book ends with a 'double decalogue': a compact conclusion written across bold yellow pages. It proclaims: "...defend diversity... generate mixing... prepare the future... foster uninhibited visions..." and make "...a Hybrid Catalonia...a Networked Catalonia...a Glocal



'HiCat' is a 'prospectors compendium' of ideas. It is sent like an evocative postcard from Catalonia to awaken our imagination, and asks us to look beyond the limits of our own dull planning zones. ●

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